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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by the International Association of Applied Psychology, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Council of Psychologists, International Council of Women, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, World Council for Psychotherapy, World Federation for Mental Health, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement*

1. We are committed to the promotion of mental health, psychological and societal well-being, the prevention and treatment of mental illness and emotional distress, and the improvement in the delivery and quality of mental health services through advocacy and education at the United Nations.

2. The importance of maintaining full mental health for all people is recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) in its constitution. Historically, mental health has been overlooked or minimized in discussions at the United Nations.

3. We agree that allowing girls and women of all ages to access and participate in education and training is essential in providing them with full employment opportunities. It is imperative that we confront the attitudes and mores that perpetuate gender-based educational inequity and seek to remove barriers that prevent girls and women from fully engaging in the workplace and the community.

4. Education and physical and mental health are integrally connected. There are serious psychological consequences if girls and women are prevented from obtaining an education. These consequences are lifelong if women's intellectual growth is stunted. Worldwide, 120 million school-age children are deprived of their right to education, and who may suffer loss of self-esteem among other psychological problems.

5. Education empowers girls and women of all ages to resist violence and assert themselves. Lacking marketable skills, uneducated women cannot obtain decent work, are perceived as an economic burden, and remain vulnerable to violence. Educated women are more likely to reinvest resources in the health and education of their children and participate in political discussions, thereby improving the function of Government and civic institutions. Girls who are literate are more likely to teach their mothers and grandmothers to read and write.

6. Consistent with the release of the United Nations Population Fund report on the State of the World Population 2010 and its publication entitled "*From Conflict and Crisis to Renewal: Generations of Change*", the 2010 WHO report on *mental health and development*, and the goals of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), education is necessary to promote resilience and renewal, and to redefine the roles between boys and girls and men and women to end sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict and to encourage greater participation by women in peacebuilding initiatives.

7. The World Medical Association declared at its annual assembly in Vancouver, Canada, that violence against women and girls has become a worldwide institutionalized phenomenon and a major public health crisis. Among the consequences of violence and abuse of women and girls are numerous debilitating mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, chronic grief and despair, as well as the long-lasting effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. Uneducated and mentally ill women and girls are doubly stigmatized and isolated. Suicide is the second leading cause of premature death in women.

8. The physical and mental health of mothers and their children benefit greatly when women are educated. Fertility rates and maternal and infant mortality rates are

* Issued without formal editing.

lower in societies where educated women have smaller, healthier and better educated families. Educated women insist on education for all of their children, but particularly for their daughters. At the United Nations Department of Public Information 2010 conference on non-governmental organizations, held in Melbourne, Australia, it was noted that at least 340,000 women die each year of pregnancy-related causes, including from the lack of trained health-care professionals during childbirth. Women not only deserve adequately trained health-care providers throughout childbirth, but also are the largest untapped potential to become those educated providers.

9. The World Bank has reported that girls' education is associated with increased income for their families. If there is only a 1 per cent increase in the number of women with a secondary education, annual per capita income grows 0.3 per cent annually. This growth is significant not only for women and their families but also for the global economy. Mental health is an integral component of a comprehensive approach to access of women and girls to employment.

10. The following recommendations are essential for promoting education and mental health and increasing the well-being of girls and women of all ages. We respectfully request the implementation of the following action priorities.

- Women of all ages must have full access to education and training in order to obtain decent employment, and thereby reduce high levels of poverty and disease
- Women and girls of all ages must be educated in order to facilitate their physical, mental and reproductive health and well-being
- Cultural attitudes of both men and women must be changed through education in order to prevent violence against girls and women, to prevent HIV/AIDS and other diseases, to prevent forced early marriages, trafficking and forced prostitution, and to promote gender equity
- The worldwide bias against women in science, mathematics, technology and related fields must be eliminated to facilitate their entry into all spheres of employment opportunities
- Adequate culturally appropriate mental health screening, counselling and ongoing services for women and girls with chronic mental illness must be developed in close collaboration with the communities served
- Adequate funding for training and retraining health workers and teachers, with particular focus on opportunities for women, must be provided to improve the infrastructure of the health and education sectors
- Ongoing quality monitoring and evaluation of existing and new educational programmes and services must be made